

Then:

Sakeenah had been crying for the last half an hour. "What happened, Sakeenah? See your toy, how beautiful it is, how it smiles. Smile, you, too. Like this doll, dear baby." But Sakeenah wouldn't be soothed. Mother would go on asking what happened, again and again, and there would only be more and more cries. Now the elder sister Ameenah too had joined this vociferous protest of crying. She too was crying now, with all the power that her frail body could muster.

Mom would ask, "What's the matter?" and there would be no answer, only cries, louder and louder. At times, the cries would lower down, appearing as if the chorus was coming to a slow musical end. And all of a sudden, it would rejuvenate with a renewed loudness and urgency.

It's not that the mother did not know the reason. Mom had just now said her 'Asr prayer and she too cried, but softly, so that only the All-Hearing Allaah could listen, and in no way her daughters. The hot summer day was about to end but not a particle of solid food had made an appearance before the babies, the younger one of whom had learnt to walk just a few months back. Mom knew that though she had not tasted a food since the day before yesterday, yet she could bear it. But what about the little, innocent babies. The devout servant of Allaah and loving mom knew whatever affliction befalls her would only bring more and more reward for her. Her ranks in Paradise would be raised. And then, in the Hereafter, she would wish, "Why didn't I have some more of it in the temporal world?" But as for now, no thoughts could make her bear the sight of her crying babies. Folding up her prayer-mat, she had made up her mind to go for the least desired of excursions. With her two babies, she came to a hut. A hut similar to hers. She would have passed by it, silently. The outer appearance of the house revealed that the inmates were most likely to be in a condition similar to hers. Yet she stopped. Less because she hoped she would get some food here, and more because her feet seemed to be giving up. At any moment, they could refuse to carry her any further, with one of the babies in her lap.

"Mother! Have mercy on the poor! Help us, for Allaah's sake!"

The poor yet honorable lady did turn up at the call. With a handful of dinars or dirhams? No. With a plate of rice and daal? No, not even that. She came, but without anything with her! But as she came near the mom of two, her hands unfolded, and out came a date-fruit. The mother thankfully accepted it, took it in her mouth, bit it into two. And the two babies had their share while the mom, also hungry, looked joyfully at them, with satisfaction!

At home, the frame on her north wall had the kalimah written in beautiful calligraphy. And the south wall had some hadiths by the holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. The two sad reminders of her old days when she had a husband, when she had some money, when she could go marketing,

when she could afford these things. Tears fell from her eyes as she perused the hadiths. One of them read: "If a person faces some affliction on account of daughters (and poverty), these daughters will screen him from the Hell-fire." The believing lady knew that but for the hadith and for her faith in reward from Allāh, she could not have born this torment.

Against all her wishes, the night came and it did not stop. How she wished the night would stop so that the single date-fruit would have sufficed her daughters. But it did not halt. And the joy of getting to eat a date-fruit after intense hunger passed away with it. So, the next morning, the mother woke up to pray, softly, quietly, silently, ardently wishing that the two babies slept forever or at least till the time some regular arrangement for food could be made. But how long could they sleep? Half of a date-fruit and some water to drink could not keep them in the comfort of sleep for long.

It's morning. The same scene as last evening. But, the house-lady has more to offer her this time. Three date-fruits! A three hundred per cent increase in her fortunes. So now, the mother too would have a sweet fruit to taste. The mom gives a date-fruit each to Ameenah and Sakeenah, and lifts the third to her mouth. But the babies having gulped their share in no time, looked hungrily, on the third, on its way to their mother's mouth. The mother has not tasted a solid edible for three days. Yet, the third date-fruit gets divided into two: one each for the babies!

Now:

The baby was smiling delightfully. Perhaps, greeting the new world it had just entered a day back. It would chuckle and make some sound of joy, of laughter. Perhaps, it hoped some caring motherly hand would caress it, lift it up and lay it down. She would play with it and it with her. The mutual love would transcend the limitations of its vocabulary-less language of communication. But the bond would be strong, nonetheless.

Alas! It was mistaken. Her favorite movie had ended now. Turning off her TV, she now turned her attention to this silly nonsense – the useless baby. It demanded love from her but without any expensive V-day presents. It would cherish a caress, a loving fondle but that would not gratify her lust. So what use was it? While she thought over it, over the expenses she would have to incur on account of it, over milk and medicines she would have to arrange for it, and the nastiest part of it all: it would dirty its bed and she would have to clean its foul filth with her own well-creamed, sparkling, fair and lovely hands. Or else, she would have to bear the expenses of a maid.

Then, like a lightning, a scene she had seen inside her deity – the television – struck her. She remembered a scene she had seen on it long ago. Right from her childhood, she had been an ardent worshipper of this idiot box. She would try to dress as the box would suggest her. She would choose her hair-style from what the box presented before her. She would hate the poor because the box told her the poor held back her mighty nation from a 30 % growth-rate and from the status of a mighty super-power. She loved her prime minister for the box told her he

was a genius of impeccable character. She hated the burqa-wearing women because she had known from her deity they love the life of oppression and subjugation to their men. Now, her deity came up with a precept at this juncture too.

The baby looked at its mother, and smiled, with love and affection. The beaming light of joy on its face roused envy in the sun at the sunrise in a hill-station, and in the full moon in a lovely, picturesque garden. In any case, why should it not smile when it had known no grief in its entire life of ... a little more than a day!

The mother looked at her baby, but ...! Bump! Smash! Splash! The television-scene had been re-enacted. Alas! That smile turned out to be its last. The baby exuding bliss a minute back now lay disfigured. Head smashed to the wall. A part of its brain lay bare. Blood spread on the floor. One of the eyes protruding out. Neck twisted. Lips entwined in part, and separated far apart in the other half. No smiles now. No cries either, from the baby.

And the mom? Relieved! Content! Gratified! Now there will be no disturbance in her love and love-making with her boy-friend. Satisfaction that comes from a good act was hers now!!

And so said the court in its verdict, months later: "The mom has done no wrong."

Inspiration 1: Riyāz-us Sālihīn p.93 (Eng), 1/193(Ar):

268. 'Āishah (May Allāh be pleased with her) reported: A woman came to me with her two daughters.

She asked me (for charity) but she found nothing with me except one date-fruit, so I gave it to her. She accepted it and then divided it between her two daughters and herself ate nothing out of that. She then got up and went out. When Messenger of Allāh (PBUH) came in, and I narrated to him the story, he said, "[He who is involved \(in the responsibility\) of \(bringing up\) daughters, and he is benevolent](#)

[towards them, they would become protection for him against Hell-fire](#)".

[Al-Bukhārī and Muslim].

Commentary: This Hadīth also tells us about the great merit and reward of kind treatment with daughters.

269. 'Āishah (May Allāh be pleased with her) reported: A poor woman came to me carrying her two daughters. I gave her three date-fruits. She gave a date to each of them and then she took up one date- fruit and brought that to her mouth to eat, but her daughters asked her that also. She then divided between them the date-fruit that she intended to eat. This (kind) treatment of her impressed me and I mentioned that to Messenger of Allāh (PBUH) who said, "[Verily, Allāh has assured Jannah for her, because of \(this act\) of her, or said, "He \(SWT\) has rescued her from Hell-Fire](#)".

[Muslim].

Commentary: Besides great merit of the upbringing of daughters, this Hadīth also tells us that if a wife has secured general permission from her husband about Sadaqah ([alms and charity](#)) she can offer Sadaqah, and its reward will be given to both of them. The former will be entitled to it for paying it, while the latter will be eligible to it for giving his consent to it.

Inspiration 2: Purdah by Abul A'lā Maudūdī, pp.43-44:

Once a working girl was so much delighted at the death of her six-month -old child that she danced and sang out of sheer joy by its corpse and exclaimed:

"We certainly won't have another. My husband and I are greatly relieved by this one's death. Think what a little baby is: it cries all the time, it dirties its clothes and one is never (at peace) with it". (P. 75).

The more tragic part of this malady is that it is spreading fast, with the government and law courts giving scant attention to this. For instance, once two girls were produced before the Court Assize for the Loire district on the charge of killing their babies, and both were acquitted. One of them had drowned her infant, though her relatives had offered to bring up the child, as they had done in the case of another to whom she had previously given birth. But the mother was determined not to let it live. The court let her off observing that her crime was pardonable. The other girl, in the most gruesome act, had strangled her baby, and when she found it was still alive she knocked it against a wall. She was also acquitted by the French judges and jury. In another case a dancer was put before the jury of the Seine. She had tried to tear out her infant's tongue, crushed its skull and cut its neck. She was also held innocent both by the judges and the jury!
